



Testimony of Ashley Zane
Government Affairs Associate, CBIA
Before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Hartford, CT
March 8, 2022
Testifying in Support of:

HB 5137: AN ACT STUDYING AND FUNDING THE ROBERTA B. WILLIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

My name is Ashley Zane and I am a Government Affairs Associate for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. CBIA is Connecticut's largest business organization, with thousands of member companies, small and large, representing a diverse range of industries from across the state. Ninety-five percent of CBIA member companies have 100 or fewer employees.

I am here in support of HB 5137, An Act Studying and Funding the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. Investing in higher education is critical to ensuring our state's economic future, and expanding access and awareness is the key to expanding opportunity.

Only 28% of eligible Connecticut students received a state need-based grant in fiscal year 2019 translating to 11,093 of 39,389 eligible students. It is estimated that the state grant per undergraduate enrollment is approximately \$253 per student, significantly lagging our neighboring states and the national average of \$688. As college enrollment has seen a steady decline in enrollment due to the pandemic, ensuring the highest need students have access to funding is critical to ensure they have options for their future and are not left behind.

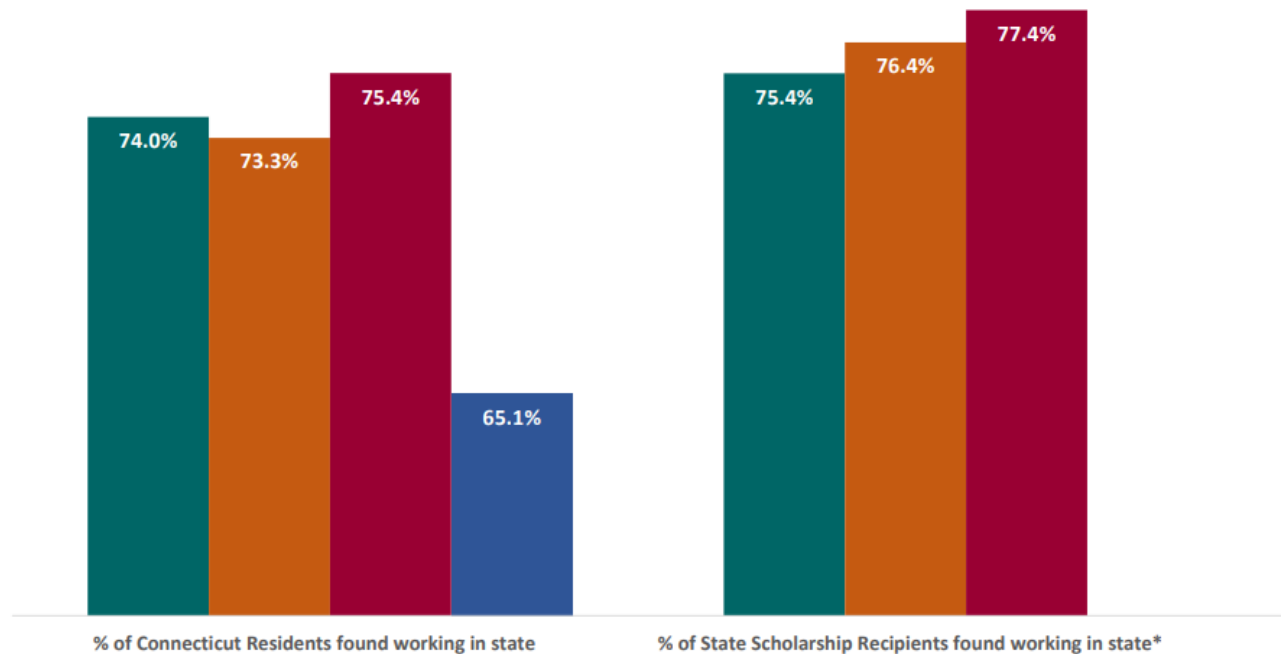
The average debt for a graduating senior in Connecticut is \$35,853, placing Connecticut fifth highest in the country. An unintended consequence of this underfunding and high-cost environment can be found in the migration of talent to neighboring states like Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York, where students can find better financial aid and grants options. When these students graduate, many may not return to Connecticut. On page two, there is a data showing that students who receive state scholarships were more likely to remain working in Connecticut two years after graduation. This is critical as employers cite workforce development and the need for talent as their top priority.

CBIA hopes that you will pass this bill out of committee, and we look forward to working with you on this throughout the session.

Percent of 2015 Graduates Working in Connecticut Two Years After Graduation

Source: P20 WIN Employment and Wage Outcomes for
CT Public and Private Non-profit Postsecondary Education Programs (0014 & 0016)

■ CCIC ■ Community Colleges ■ CSCU ■ University of Connecticut



See full reports: <https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/P20Win/Reports>

* Scholarship data not available for the University of Connecticut.